

BAND PRACTICE

The Loma Alta Brass Band warmed up in Clete's living room: Ellis, chubby and solid like his tuba, oom-pahed, Butch, his tie undone and his shirt wrinkled from a hard day at the office, wah-wahed on his trombone, his bald head shining like his brass instrument, Bob, the young fellow that worked with Ellis, wore dark sunglasses and growled on his saxophone, and Clete, the host, long and thin like his clarinet, toodled happily.

Ellis ended the warm-up by tapping on his tuba with a ball-point pen. "O.K. gentlemen," He said, "And a-one, and a-two, and a-three"

The boys broke into the old blues standard, Big Leg Woman, shaking the walls and rattling the windows, until they were brought up short by a group of mostly stout and sour looking middle-aged women being herded into the room by Juanita, Clete's wife. She said, "You boys are gonna have to find another place to practice. We're havin' a Tupperware party." When the boys had packed their last instrument, grumbled their last grumble, and headed, ostensibly, over to Ellis' house to continue practice, the girls drew the curtains and got out the lingerie.

They drank wine coolers from a big glass pitcher and took turns modelling the night clothes. Ruth, Ellis' wife, pranced out of the bedroom in a short, see-through, lacey black nightie, giving the term 'thunder thighs' a whole new meaning, while the rest of the girls hooted and howled at her, and more than one of them rummaged in a purse for a checkbook while Juanita gave her sales spiel, saying that this little number was guaranteed to arouse your man.

And outside the boys crowded around the window, trying to see through the crack in the curtains, pushing and elbowing, fighting for position.

Bob, the young fellow, had the view when Ruth emerged from the hallway, grinning and jigging. He pulled away from the window like somebody had stuck a branding iron in his eye, and Ellis took his place, peering into the room as Ruth turned her back on the blushing, check-writing women, shaking her big, white, cellulite-dimpled ass at them. He backed off as quick as Bob had, saying, "Christ, I hope she doesn't buy the damned thing," as Clete and Butch fought for their turn at the window.

Dan Leman